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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH

TO RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE 2190

RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 4753

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3324

INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 008825

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2031

TAGS: [KTFN](#) [EFIN](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: TERRORISM FINANCE: POST'S RESPONSE ON THE RADICAL
IDEOLOGUE INITIATIVE

REF: A. SECSTATE 135332

[¶](#)B. RIYADH 8415

Classified By: Ambassador James Oberwetter for reasons 1.5 (b), (d), and (g).

[¶](#)1. (S/NF) Mission Saudi Arabia supports the aim of the Radical Ideologue Initiative to sanction individuals and entities that provide both monetary/material support and ideological support to terror organizations (ref a). This initiative underlines the international community's need to counter the terrorists, attempts to recruit followers and supporters based on ideological appeals. Post does have four general concerns on implementation of this initiative, based on our understanding of Saudi sensitivities.

Legal Concern

[¶](#)2. (S/NF) Post's reading of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions (especially op para 2 of UNSCR 1617) is that the UN Sanctions Committee is authorized to sanction acts that directly support and facilitate the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida, e.g., recruiting terrorists, and financing or planning terrorist acts.

[¶](#)3. (S/NF) The SAG's policy as articulated to us at nearly every meeting, is that they will undertake to fulfill their obligations as a UN member. This includes implementing UN Committee designations against prominent SAG citizens such as Yassin Al-Qadi and Abd Al-Hamid Sulaiman Al-Mua'jjil. Given their legalist rationale for taking these actions, they might see our Radical Ideologues Initiative as a new interpretation of the UNSCRs to broaden the scope of sanctions to include ideological support. If not properly explained to the Saudis, this initiative may have the potential of lessening their cooperation with us on implementing UN Committee designations.

Tactical Concern

[¶](#)4. (S/NF) Post's liaison representatives have been working with the SAG in a ongoing program to deter radical clerics

from their radical preaching and teachings in the Kingdom. This program has three goals: 1) to monitor radical clerics; 2) co-opt radical clerics; and 3) remove the clerics if they are not cooperative. The SAG believes it has been proactive in its response to radicalism in the Kingdom. The SAG believes its approach demonstrates a willingness to deter this type of radical ideologue behavior. For the U.S. to designate individuals that the SAG is targeting for co-optation might be seen as a US effort to undercut the Saudis. Thus our Radical Ideologue Initiative must be closely coordinated with the SAG at the initial stages of targeting these individuals/organizations and throughout the process.

Potential for Media Backlash

¶15. (S/NF) Post understands that this Initiative would aim to deter radical ideological support for terrorists, by ensuring some of its headline exponents (who are also financing or recruiting terrorists and thus sanctionable under relevant UNSCRs) are sanctioned by the UN Committee. But a public affairs posture that stresses the ideological support, rather than the evidence of financing/recruiting, could play into the hands of the extremist preachers. They could point to this as an example of a war on Islamic ideas, not on criminal acts of terrorism.

Avoiding Inadvertent Political Tensions

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¶16. (S/NS) In implementing and managing the Initiative, it will be vitally important to keep in mind that the Saudi political system is based on a 260-year-old alliance between the ruling Al Saud royal family and the Al al-Shaykh family, the guardians of the Kingdom's religious institution. The Al al-Shaykh are the descendants of Muhammmad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi movement. Just as the Al Saud dominate the Saudi government, so the Al al-Shaykh dominate the Kingdom's religious life, courts, and educational system.

We currently know of no Al al-Shaykh members who might be impacted by the designation process under the Initiative. That said, the designation process will need to take this key alliance into account, in order to avoid inadvertently affecting the core of the Saudi political system. If forced to choose between their bedrock domestic political allies and interests and the US, the Al Saud will always choose the former.

¶17. (S/NF) In conclusion, we fully support prioritizing extremist imams and inciters of terrorism, who also qualify for designation under the UNSCRs, as long as we closely coordinate through liaison channels with the SAG. We do question the benefits of rolling out a new Initiative when this prioritization can be accomplished without public fanfare and within the USG's counter terrorism interagency process.

OBERWETTER